

## Review/Television

CBS NY TIMES  
11/17/88

# Replays Nov. 22

By WALTER GOODMAN

At 1:40 P.M. Eastern standard time on Nov. 22, 1963, the CBS soap opera "As the World Turns" was interrupted by a bulletin read by Walter Cronkite: Shots had been fired at President John F. Kennedy in Dallas. Thus began 53 hours of reporting by CBS (and similar exertions by the other networks) from the assassination of the President to his imposing state funeral.

Dan Rather, who was on the scene in Dallas (looking very boyish), narrates two hours of excerpts from that journalistic marathon tonight at 9 on CBS. He credits the long weekend of television coverage with calming the nation; and watching part of it again, we can appreciate that it must have reassured viewers that they were not alone, that millions of their fellow citizens shared their feelings of confusion and concern and were grieving along with them.

The events move fast in this condensed version. Hard upon the first bulletin comes the news that the President is dead. For a few moments Mr. Cronkite, keeping his voice professionally steady, but plainly shaken, was more than a messenger; toying abstractedly with his eyeglasses as he tried to absorb the impact of the news that everyone had feared, he became a surrogate for his audience.

This CBS report has a grim fascination as it speeds over a series of events that still seem to have been concocted by a writer of pulp fiction: The shooting of a young President who with his glamorous wife had so recently turned Washington into Camelot; the capture within a couple of hours of a suspect of murky provenance, whom Mr. Cronkite calls "Lee Henry Oswald"; the on-camera murder of the suspect, identified by a reporter at the scene as "Lee Harold Oswald," which dramatically interrupts coverage of the ceremonial respects being paid to the fallen President in Washington.

Some of the clips hold bitter irony today. Kennedy, commenting on America's involvement in Vietnam, says, "In the final analysis it is their war." A reporter presses the Dallas chief of police after Oswald's arrest:



President John F. Kennedy with his wife, Jacqueline, riding in motorcade in Dallas moments before he was shot.

"Chief, do you have any concern for the safety of your prisoner?" The chief expresses confidence that his prisoner is safe. Robert F. Kennedy is seen among the mourners; not many years later he would be the one mourned. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who had been living with threats of assassination, reflects, perhaps more about himself than about the slain President, "This cause is right, and we must stand up for it," adding "even if it means death."

Speaking of the decade that followed the killing, Mr. Rather says, "Something violent had been shaken loose in the American subconscious." But you don't have to indulge in mass psychoanalysis or be among the iconographers of John F. Kennedy to find yourself wishing as you watch the Kennedys arrive in Dallas that November day that instead of walking down the airplane gangway, they

might hear us crying out to them and turn back.

Next week brings a deluge of documentaries and segments of news programs to mark the 25th anniversary of the assassination. On Monday, Channels 13, 21 and 49 will show "J.F.K. — A Time Remembered," a combination of film footage and reminiscences.

The Arts & Entertainment Network will interrupt its programming at 1:56 p.m. on Tuesday for a six-hour replay of the NBC coverage of precisely a quarter century ago; there will be no commercials, which, given the commercial-stuffing propensities of A&E, must be taken as a sign of reverence. Channels 4 and 11 and the HBO, Cinemax, Disney, TNT and CUNY cable channels also are making plans to mark the occasion.